

More must be done to secure our borders. The U.S. Constitution specifically empowers Congress with the authority “to establish a uniform rule of naturalization...throughout the United States.” Congress cannot faithfully execute this constitutional responsibility if individuals are blatantly entering the U.S. illegally showing little respect for our laws. In addition, illegal immigration, devalues the efforts of law-abiding people currently in the process applying to immigrate to the U.S., as well as those immigrants in the U.S. who are here legally because they waited in line as the law prescribes.

To protect and preserve the rule of law, the federal government must first and foremost secure our borders. Once we make changes to secure our borders and stem the tide of illegal crossings into the U.S., Congress should consider broader revamping of the U.S. immigration system.

Subsequently, I generally support measures that are designed to enforce our borders and existing immigration laws, augment penalties for illegal immigration, ensure that our local law enforcement officials can assist with enforcing federal immigration laws where appropriate, that our border patrol agents have the resources to fulfill their mission, and that English is designated the official language of the United States. I also support fully implementing prior enacted laws that require the construction of physical barriers and “invisible” barriers (i.e. electronic and aerial surveillance) along the southern border, including the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-367) that directed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to construct roughly 850 miles of border fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border. These are minimum steps that I think can be taken to restore the integrity of U.S. international borders and immigration law.

To that end, I am a cosponsor of a strong resolution (H.Res. 499) that calls on the Executive branch to enforce and fully implement all existing laws regarding illegal immigrants and illegal immigration, such as construction of barriers along the southern border, the hiring of additional U.S. Border Agents, and use of expedited removal procedures for certain illegal immigrants. This resolution has 89 other cosponsors and has been referred to several House committees for review. We have seen some progress since this resolution has been introduced; Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff recently announced that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is in the process of hiring more than 18,000 border agents, securing approximately 775 miles of along the southern border using a combination of physical and vehicle barriers supplemented with electronic surveillance, and is working to end the policy of “catch and release” for illegal immigrants apprehended at the border by increasing detention facilities to hold them until they can be removed from the United States.

In May and June, the U.S. Senate twice debated comprehensive immigration reform legislation. However, the Senate failed to pass either bill and, consequently, sent no legislation to the House for consideration. Generally, the Senate proposals included some provisions that I liked, including provisions that would have required additional border patrol agents to be hired, the implementation of a reliable employment verification system so that our employers can be sure of the legal status of their current and potential employees, and the construction of additional barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border before any kind of new or modified immigration labor programs were established.

However, I did not support the Senate-proposed legislation because I disagreed with how it addressed the roughly 12 million illegal immigrants currently estimated to be in the United States. Individuals who wish to immigrate to the United States should do so through our legal process by following the normal path to becoming a citizen or resident, and not by breaking U.S. laws when entering our country.

I will work to ensure the enforcement of U.S. borders first, followed by careful examination of any immigration policy reforms.